

NATIONAL SCHOOLS (IRELAND) (TEACHING OF IRISH).

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 23 February 1884 *per*for,

COPY "of CORRESPONDENCE between the Irish Executive and the Commissioners of National Education in *Ireland*, with respect to the Teaching of IRISH in the IRISH NATIONAL SCHOOLS."

Dublin Castle, }
29 February 1884.]

R. G. C. HAMILTON.

— No. 1. —

The Chief Secretary for Ireland to the Secretaries to the Commissioners of National Education.

Gentlemen,

Dublin Castle, 1 January 1884.

I SEND you, for the consideration of the Commissioners of National Education, a Memorial which was presented to me by the Council of the Gaelic Union.

The chief proposal of the Gaelic Union is:—

"That in Irish-speaking districts the pupils who are ignorant of English, or who cannot converse in, or understand, that language but imperfectly, should be taught English through the medium of the Irish language. With this view we would strongly and respectfully urge that the Irish language be made an ordinary subject in the Board's programme from the first class or standard inclusive, and upwards; and that only a minimum knowledge of the language at first, as regards reading and writing and the spelling of simple words, be sufficient for a pass."

In sustinment of this proposal, the Council of the Gaelic Union make various representations upon which, as upon the main proposal itself, I should like to be favoured with the observations and views of the Commissioners.

I should also desire to know whether there was any special provision made in the early foundation of the National System of Education in 1831 or 1832, for the education in the Irish language of those children who spoke Irish only.

Further, I should like to know how the proposals of Sir Patrick Keenan, made in his report for 1855, and referred to in the Memorial of the Gaelic Union, in respect to the cultivation of the Irish language, were dealt with by the Board of National Education.

I should also desire to have some information as to the recommendations, if any, of the Royal Commission of 1868, upon Sir Patrick Keenan's evidence, also referred to in the Memorial, as to the use of the Irish language in the National Schools.

The Commissioners would also, perhaps, kindly favour me with any information at their command as to the desire of the parents of pupils of national schools to cultivate a knowledge of the Irish language.

Further, I should desire to know, in brief detail, the representations which have been made, from time to time, to the Commissioners of National Education

tion by non-official persons or bodies to engraft the teaching of Irish upon the curriculum of the National Schools, and the steps which the Commissioners have taken upon such representations, or the steps which, independently of any such extraneous representations, they may have taken in the same direction.

As doubtless the Commissioners may have turned their attention to the question of the education of the children of Wales in respect of the Welsh language, and of the children of Scotland as regards the Gaelic, or of any corresponding Continental incidents of vernacular education, I should be much obliged if they would kindly favour me with any information on the subject in each country which they may possess.

I cannot, of course, ask the Commissioners to make any observations upon Sir Patrick Keenan's Report upon the teaching of the Maltese to the children of Malta, more than once adverted to in the Memorial of the Gaelic Union, but they may possibly see their way to request Sir Patrick Keenan to be good enough to append to their reply to this communication a supplemental memorandum from himself, for my information, on this subject.

The Secretaries to the Commissioners
of National Education.

I am, &c.
(signed) *G. O. Trevelyan.*

Enclosure in No. 1.

MEMORIAL of the GAELIC UNION.

To the Right Hon. *George Otto Trevelyan*, M.P., Chief Secretary for Ireland.

Sir,

On behalf of the Council of the Gaelic Union, a Society established for the cultivation and preservation of the Irish language, but more especially with the view of utilising that language for the better advancement of education among the people in Irish-speaking districts, we beg to submit the following statement with the object of securing the good offices of the Government and of the educational authorities in the direction just indicated. The Irish language in those districts has not, by any means, been yet sufficiently availed of as an instrument of mental culture and education; whereas our contention is that it should be used as a potent factor in the spread of popular education among the masses of the Irish-speaking population.

In the first place, we beg to state that the total number of persons set down in the Census Returns for 1881 as speaking Irish was then 949,932. Of these 64,167 are referred to as speaking "Irish only," while the remaining 885,765 persons are mentioned as speaking both "Irish and English." But we believe we can safely assume that there are in Ireland at present one million of people capable of speaking the Irish language, exclusive of the considerable number who understand it. In the second summary volume of the Census Returns, page 73, some valuable statistics are given, some of which we here quote, showing how the Irish-speaking population are distributed, and a comprehensive table (No. 157) is also given in the same volume, setting forth those figures in detail by counties, chief towns, and provinces. This table also exhibits how the Irish language was distributed at the decennial intervals or periods, 1861, 1871, and 1881. We purpose, however, confining our remarks chiefly to the figures for 1881. In the Census Returns it is stated that the number of persons speaking "Irish only" was 39,395 less in 1881 than in 1871. With reference to this decrease in the number of persons speaking "Irish only," we believe it to be attributable chiefly, if not entirely, to emigration. The Census Commissioners, however, state, that "these differences are more apparent than real," on account of "a more minute inquiry being instituted" in 1881, and in this opinion we believe the Census Commissioners may be correct.

The recognition of the Irish language by the Commissioners of National Education, and their placing it as an extra subject on the National School programmes for both teachers and pupils, and also its being included in the intermediate education programme as well as in the curriculum of the Royal Irish University, served to give the language a status and an impetus which it had not previously attained, or rather which it had lost; and we believe that all these circumstances taken together may have tended to increase somewhat the number of Irish-speaking people from 1871 to 1881. The following is the order of the counties in which more than 20 per cent. of the people speak the language:—Galway, 64·9 per cent.; Mayo, 60·2; Waterford, 54·4; Kerry, 49·4; Clare, 46; Cork, 39·1; Donegal, 34·8; Sligo, 28·6; and Limerick, 20·8. In other words, more than one-half the people in the three first-named counties, considerably more than one-third in the next four counties, and more than one-fifth of the people in the two last-named counties, speak the Irish language. These nine counties alone represent an Irish-speaking population of 897,411 persons, and an area of nearly one-half of the entire country, viz., 14,600 square miles. The difference between that number and 1,000,000 Irish-speaking persons, about 100,000, therefore, may be said to be scattered over the remaining 23 counties.

Again, it may be observed, that five of the nine counties are in Munster; three are in Connaught; and one, Donegal, in Ulster. The school-going population of those nine counties, therefore, should, it is presumed, receive the largest share of attention, both from the Educational authorities and from the Council of the Gaelic Union, in any well-directed effort to have the pupils attending the primary schools in those counties taught both languages, so as to render the labour of education easy as well as natural, and in accordance with the principles laid down in the writings of Sir P. J. Keenan, Resident Commissioner of the National Board, both as regards Irish and Maltese, and with his evidence before the Royal Commission on Education in 1868. Taking 949,000 to be the correct number of Irish-speaking persons, and applying the method adopted by the Commissioners of National Education in estimating the school-going population, namely, children from five to 13 years of age, we should have 190,000 school children speaking Irish. But we consider this estimate too high, and believe there should be about 150,000 children, probably more, learning the Irish language, with a view to their being afterwards taught English properly. Or even if we allow 20 per cent. of those as the children of the well-to-do classes to be attending the intermediate schools and colleges and other educational establishments of the country, there would still remain over 120,000 pupils who should be learning Irish in the National Schools.

This brings us to the position which the Irish language really does occupy in the primary schools, and we shall now compare the actual state of things with what, in our minds, they ought to be. In the year 1878 the Commissioners of National Education, on memorial extensively and influentially signed by lay and clerical Irishmen of all creeds and classes, and of all shades of political opinion, consented to place the Irish language on an equal footing in the schools with the teaching of Latin, Greek, and French, as an extra subject and for which results fees are paid, if passes are obtained on examination.

Besides those extra subjects, just quoted, in the National Schools there are six others, namely, music, drawing, geometry, and algebra, physical science, physical geography, and industrial work for girls. Now, with the exception of vocal music and drawing, in male and female schools, and industrial work for girls only, the rules of the Commissioners regulating the teaching of extra subjects state that "No extra subject (of which Irish is one) is to be taught to children under 10 years of age (of whom there are 404,445 on the registers of the schools) with a view to claim results fees, excepting in physical geography." We should state, however, that vocal music is taught as an extra subject to pupils in the second standard or class and upwards, and drawing to children in the third standard or class and upwards, and, of course, are paid for by results.

The following rule, however, is undoubtedly prohibitive in its tendency as regards Irish among other extras; but our concern at present is with the Irish exclusively, and with the proper education of the children in Irish-speaking districts.

The rule says :—

"All extra subjects except vocal music, drawing, geometry, and algebra, are to be taught in National Schools before or after school hours, and not during the time allowed for recreation, except in the case of boys or girls who have been examined once in sixth class, the highest standard. Such pupils may be allowed to devote a portion of the ordinary school-hours to their extra subjects, provided the ordinary routine business of the school be not interfered with."

We respectfully submit that the operation of this rule alone, as applied to the Irish language in the National Schools, is of itself fatal to its recognition by the Board as an extra subject, and renders such recognition almost entirely nugatory and worthless.

No doubt Irish in this respect is in the same category as Latin, Greek, and French; but we maintain that Irish-speaking children should receive exceptional treatment, and be afforded special facilities for learning the language, as to enable them to acquire a proper knowledge of the English language also. What we urge is, that in Irish-speaking districts the pupils who are ignorant of English, or who cannot converse in, or understand, that language but imperfectly, should be taught English through the medium of the Irish language. With this view we would strongly and respectfully urge that the Irish language be made an ordinary subject on the Board's programme, from the first class or standard inclusive, and upwards; and that only a minimum knowledge of the language at first as regards reading and writing, and the spelling of simple words, be sufficient for a pass. As a proof of the prohibitory tendency and almost exclusive operation of the rule quoted above, since the recognition of the language by the National Board, we beg to quote the following figures from the Board's recent reports :—

In 1879, the first year the language was introduced as an extra, 304 pupils were examined in Irish, when 143 passed; in 1880, 68 were examined and 32 passed; and in 1881, 29 were examined and 12 passed; and in 1882, 35 were examined and 17 passed. And these figures refer to all the National Schools, which, as we have shown above, represent a population of 150,000 children speaking Irish. It is therefore clear from these unsatisfactory results, not that the teachers and pupils take hardly any interest at present in the study of the language, but that the existing regulations of the Commissioners, whilst apparently recognising it, by placing it on their programmes as an extra subject to be paid for by results, have, notwithstanding, the effect of almost completely excluding it from, and finally extinguishing it in the primary schools of the country. The figures just quoted, taken in connection with the rule in force bearing on the point, fully illustrate this, viz. :—"All extra subjects [excepting those named] are to be taught before or after school-hours." This is the Board's rule, and its effect is crushing in its completeness so far as the Irish language is concerned.

We claim, however, on the part of the uneducated in Irish-speaking districts, that the children should be taught in Irish, and when they have learned to read this language, that there should afterwards, during their school course, be one hour of the day within the school-hours devoted to lessons in Irish for those pupils. It is by such means, and through such a method put into practical effect in the schools, that greater educational results would be attained; while some of our greatest educationists have recommended that the practice of endeavouring to teach Irish-speaking children English from books and tablets exclusively English, should be effectually altered and reformed.

On this point Sir P. J. Keenan, when head inspector of National Schools in 1855, wrote as follows in the Twenty-second Report of the Commissioners, page 75 :—

"Many good men seem to me to forget that the people might know both Irish and English, and they also forget that by continuing to speak Irish, and learning English through its medium, the latter language would be enriched by the imagery and vigour of the mother tongue, and the process of learning would be a mental exercise of so varied and powerful a character, that its disciplinary effect upon the mind would be equal in itself, and by itself, to a whole course of education of the ordinary kind. The shrewdest people in the world are those who are bilingual; borderers have always been remarkable in this respect. But the most stupid children I have ever met with are those who were learning English whilst endeavouring to forget Irish."

"It is hard to conceive any more difficult school exercise than to begin our first alphabet, and

and first syllabification, and first attempt at reading, in a language of which we know nothing, and all this without the means of reference to, or comparison with, a word of our mother tongue. Yet this is the ordeal Irish-speaking children have to pass through, and the natural result is that the English which they acquire is very imperfect. The real policy of the educationist would, in my opinion, be to teach Irish grammatically and soundly to the Irish-speaking people, and then to teach them English through the medium of their native language.

"I have already stated in substance the conclusions at which I arrived, but for convenience sake I beg to repeat them. I am convinced—

"1st. That the Irish-speaking people ought to be taught the Irish language grammatically; and that school-books in Irish should be prepared for the purpose.

"2nd. That English should be taught to all Irish-speaking children through the medium of the Irish.

"3rd. That if this system be pursued, the people will be very soon better educated than they are now, or possibly can be for many generations, upon the present system, and—

"4th. That the English language will, in a short time, be more generally and purely spoken than it can be by the present system for many generations."

And later still, in 1868, the same eminent authority, when examined before the Royal Commission on Education, gave the following in his evidence:—

"Question 1662. Would you propose that they [Irish-speaking children] should learn Irish only at first, or both Irish and English together?—I propose that that should be done in Ireland which the present Scotch Commission approve for Scotland. I propose that the children should commence their school education on Irish books, and that their instruction in English should begin when they have learned to read Irish.

"1663. Do you think those who read Irish, and subsequently learn to read English, will continue to read English?—I think they will all through life afterwards be an English-reading people."

At Query 1738, Sir P. J. Keenan quoted the following:—

"What should be thought of a system of teaching little boys Greek out of a lesson-book itself composed only in Greek, and by a master addressing them in the Hellenic tongue?"

Further, in his "Report upon the Educational System of Malta, presented to both Houses of Parliament, &c., August 1880," Sir P. J. Keenan writes most forcibly and conclusively on the proper method of teaching English to the Maltese children, who do not speak or understand it, and his chief statements would apply perfectly to the case now in question if the word Irish were substituted for Maltese.

With a view, therefore, to the proper training and education of Irish children similarly situated in the National Schools, we would respectfully urge that in all cases where the teachers are able to speak and read the language fairly, they should be fully recognised as being capable of teaching it, which they unquestionably would be with the aid of the published text-books, and their familiar knowledge of the spoken language. The existing programme of examination for teachers, to secure certificates for teaching Irish, is altogether too difficult, and, in the case of a language like the Irish, requiring encouragement and patronage, we believe hard-and-fast lines should not be laid down, as in the case of Latin, Greek, and French in the National Schools. It should be remembered that we are dealing with the vernacular language of the country, and not with a foreign tongue. After the lapse of a few years, and when Irish classes in the schools are in a flourishing condition, as we hope they soon will be, the programme for both teachers and pupils might be gradually advanced. The Inspectors of National Schools should also be instructed to regard with a favourable eye the cultivation of the language, and the proper education of Irish-speaking children, or children the language of whose parents is Irish in their daily avocations.

We, therefore, respectfully urge that you will use your great influence with his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, and also with Her Majesty's Government, with a view to the proper instruction and education of Irish-speaking children in the Irish language previous to their being taught English.

By doing so, the education of the growing population in those backward Irish-speaking districts would be assured, which cannot be the case so long as the unreasonable practice is adhered to of continuing to teach Irish-speaking

pupils, and the children of Irish-speaking parents, the English language in the first instance from books and tablets entirely English, entirely regardless and apparently oblivious of the fact, that this is a part of the practice condemned frequently by Sir P. J. Keenan in his observations on the teaching of Irish as well as Maltese, and when the only rational method is to teach those young persons from the very beginning in their native tongue.

— No. 2. —

Secretary to the Commissioners of National Education to the Chief Secretary for Ireland.

Office of National Education, Dublin,
20 February 1884.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to send you a copy of a Memorandum drawn up by the Commissioners of National Education, in reply to your letter of the 1st ultimo upon the subject of the Memorial of the Gaelic Union.

I have, &c.
(signed) *W.H. Newell.*

The Right Hon. G. O. Trevelyan, M.P.,
Chief Secretary to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant,
Dublin Castle.

Enclosure in No. 2.

MEMORANDUM by the Commissioners of National Education to the Chief Secretary.

THE Commissioners of National Education have given their best consideration to your letter of the 1st January 1884, in reference to the Memorial of the Council of the Gaelic Union, and also to other matters bearing upon the subject of the Memorial.

1. The Commissioners have minutely investigated the Census Returns of the number of persons speaking English and Irish; also of the number speaking Irish only; and combining the results of this investigation with the abundant information at their command in their Inspectors' reports, and in other documents, proceed to reply to your letter upon all the points to which you invite their attention.

The memorialists, in their statistical generalizations, make no distinction between the 64,167 who speak Irish only, and the 885,765 who speak English and Irish. For very strong reasons, which will hereafter appear, the Commissioners cannot adopt this course.

Then, upon a basis of the total of these two classes, the memorialists proceed to estimate the number of children speaking Irish. They say:—

"Taking 949,000 to be the correct number of Irish-speaking persons, and applying the method adopted by the Commissioners of National Education in estimating the school-going population—namely, children from five to 13 years of age, we should have 190,000 school children speaking Irish. But we consider this estimate too high, and believe that there should be about 150,000 children, probably more, learning the Irish language, with a view to their being afterwards taught English properly. Or even if we allow 20 per cent. of those as the children of the well-to-do classes to be attending the intermediate schools and colleges, and other educational establishments of the country, there would still remain over 120,000 pupils who should be learning Irish in the National Schools."

The number between five and 13, given above, the memorialists ascertained by taking 20 per cent. of the total of 949,000 who are returned as able to speak Irish.

Now, there is a great fallacy in this. It assumes that the proportion of children between five and 13 is the same for the 949,000 who can speak Irish as for the whole population of the country. The misleading effect of this 20 per cent. fallacy is illustrated by turning to the statistics of such cities as Cork, Waterford,

Waterford, Limerick, &c. In Cork city, out of 11,344 who can speak Irish, 469, or only 4·1 per cent., are under 20 years of age. In Waterford city, out of 2,482 who can speak Irish, 102, or only 4·1 per cent., are under 20 years of age. In Limerick city, out of 2,746 who can speak Irish, 52, or only 1·9 per cent., are under 20 years of age. And taking, for instance, Limerick county and city combined, the Commissioners find that there are 32,240 who can speak Irish, of whom only 1,062, or 3·3 per cent. are under 20 years of age.

Under these circumstances the Commissioners cannot possibly accept as correct the statistical representations and generalizations of the memorialists.

The Census Tables give the lingual returns only in decades, viz.:—Under 10 years of age, 10 and under 20, and so on. Of course, the number under 20 years of age is no representation of the school age; but the Commissioners prefer to quote these figures for the sake of avoiding speculation or conjecture. Everyone acquainted with school statistics in Ireland will, however, readily understand that the limit up to 20 years of age indicates more than double the limits between five and 13. Indeed, in the population generally the number from five to 13 is only 42·1 per cent. of the number under 20 years of age.

II. The first observations of the Commissioners will have reference to those who speak English and Irish.

Of this class it may be observed that 77·4 per cent. are 20 years of age, or more than 20; although, in the population generally, only 54·1 per cent. are 20 or more than 20. This at once establishes the fact that a vast proportion of the bilingual class have no relation whatever with the question of primary education. Indeed, if great centres only, in which large numbers are returned as speaking Irish and English, were considered, this fact would be all the more manifest. The figures already quoted about Cork, Waterford, and Limerick, make this very plain.

The number of the bilingual class in all Ireland, under 20, is 200,173; less than half of whom could, of course, be regarded as of the school-going age.

Then, it cannot be overlooked in estimating the value or force of the numbers returned as bilingual in the Census Tables, that large numbers are found in places in which rarely, if ever, is heard an Irish sentence in the ordinary affairs of life or commerce. For instance, for the City of Dublin, the numbers set down as speaking Irish and English is 3,451, and, for Belfast, 1,126. English, however, it need scarcely be observed, is the universal language of such places.

Again, it is important to observe that even in such a town as Galway, where the bilingual element is returned by the Census Commissioners as very nearly the half of the whole population—70·7 per cent. of this bilingual population being 20 years of age or more—the predominance of the English language cannot be challenged. Their Inspector in Galway informs the Commissioners that the present Archbishop of Tuam, when Bishop of Galway, was in the habit of regularly preaching on Sunday mornings in Irish; but that, although his congregation was principally composed of the humbler class of people, he discontinued the Irish sermons, because “he believed that by speaking in English he was best suiting the majority of his audience.”

The commanding fact, however, in respect to those of the bilingual population who are children, whatever their number, and wheresoever found, is that they are English speakers; and owing to the opportunities which they have enjoyed of education in English, are not only likely, but certain to be more correct and easy speakers of English than of Irish, with which they have only a limited and haphazard colloquial familiarity. And, again, it must be borne in mind that, not only in every county, but in every barony and town in Ireland, these English-speaking children are mixing and living with communities the vast majority of whom are English speakers. Their journals and newspapers are English; their books are English. In point of fact, they are nearly all pursuing their education in English as pupils of National Schools. In their own interests, and in the interests of the country,

there can, therefore, be no question whatever but that the language of the education of these English-speaking children should be English.

In a country where all the interests, social, commercial, and political combine to favour the acquisition of the English language by the people, it would certainly be neither natural nor rational to impose upon children who know English an obligation to study Irish also, simply because they have to any extent, great or small, a colloquial knowledge of the Irish. If accordingly the Irish language is to be cultivated at all by such children, it must be as a philological accomplishment, when age and capacity fit them for it, like the acquisition of Latin, Greek, or French; and for this the Commissioners' Rules, to be hereafter referred to, adequately provide.

Although the Welsh and Scotch Educational Authorities, under similar circumstances, practically discountenance any reference to the vernacular in the instruction of the children attending public schools, the Commissioners of National Education have for upwards of a quarter of a century recognised the importance and value of using the Irish in the manner prescribed in the following note which they have added to the Programme of Instruction, viz.:—

"If there are Irish-speaking pupils in a school, the teacher, if acquainted with the Irish language, should, whenever practicable, employ the vernacular as an aid to the elucidation and acquisition of the English language."

III. The Commissioners have now to consider the question in connection with the exclusively Irish-speaking portion of the population.

In 1861 the number of this class was 163,275; in 1871 the number was 103,562; and in 1881 the number was 64,167.

Of the 64,167 returned for 1881, the number 20 years of age, or more, is 45,904, or 71·5 per cent., and under 20, 18,263, or 28·5 per cent. As in the case of the bilingual population, the proportion of the older section is greatly in excess of all natural dimension. In the whole population, as already stated, the proportion 20 years and above 20 is only 54·1 per cent. The question, therefore, really resolves itself into this:—Whether of the 18,263 persons under 20 years of age—not quite half of whom are of a school-going age—*i.e.*, about 9,000, and distributed over the whole country, there exist any school districts in which, in the economy of the National system, schools specially organised for the instruction of children in the vernacular as the rudimentary school course, could, if in the public interests it were deemed desirable to establish such schools, be efficiently carried on.

In the 12 counties of Leinster, the question does not arise; for in those 12 counties there is a total of only eight persons under 20 years of age who speak Irish only.

Then, as to the six counties of Munster: under 20 years of age, and speaking Irish only, there are just 2,096 persons, viz.:—

In Limerick	-	6 out of a population of 180,082 having	*246 National Schools with 39,072 on Rols.	
In Wexford	-	13	188,012	" 310 42,447 "
In Clare	-	164	141,457	" 225 " 31,202 "
In Waterford	-	306	112,760	" 190 " 18,162 "
In Cork	-	373	405,007	" 388 " 109,461 "
In Kerry	-	1,335	301,680	" 328 " 51,691 "
TOTAL	-	2,096	1,331,116	" 1,384 " 232,085 "

* The statistics of the National Schools are taken from the last published, or, as in the case of the County of Ance, unprinted returns.

Kerry is the only Munster county on which it is necessary to dwell. Of those under 20 years of age who speak Irish only, 660—*i.e.*, about one-half, might, at the most, be of the school-going age.

In an area of 1,159,355 acres, and a population of 201,039, with 325 National schools, attended by 51,691 pupils, more than a fourth of the population, it is clear that there is no opening for any special provision for schools upon a new organisation. The 660 must be absorbed in the general scheme of the National schools.

In

In the province of Connaught the number of persons under 20 years of age who speak Irish only is 10,953, viz. :—

In Sligo - - -	0 out of a population of	111,678	having	182	National Schools with	26,220	on Rolls.
In Leitrim - -	10	"	"	90,372	"	195	" 23,537
In Roscommon -	12	"	"	133,400	"	233	" 32,913
In Mayo - - -	1,610	"	"	245,212	"	319	" 58,874
In Galway - -	9,312	"	"	242,005	"	332	" 51,304
TOTAL	10,953	"	"	821,057	"	1,261	" 102,058

The only counties in Connaught that require special consideration are Galway and Mayo.

First, as to Galway: The 9,312, under 20 years of age, who know Irish only, represent about 4,600 children of a school-going age. This is a large number, but then it is to be borne in mind that Galway is an immensely large county. It has an area of 1,502,361 acres, and a population—in many parts very sparsely distributed—of 242,005, with 332 National schools, attended by 51,304 pupils. Even in the barony of Aran, composed of the Aran Islands—often referred to as typical of an Irish-speaking population—the number of all ages who speak Irish only out of a population of 3,163 is 889, of whom the number under 20 years of age is only 365, or about 180 of the school-going age. There are six National schools on the islands, with 737 pupils on the rolls.

Then, as to Mayo. The area is 1,318,129 acres. The population is 245,212, of whom 1,610, under 20 years of age, speak Irish only—or, in round numbers, about 800 of a school-going age. The number of National schools is 319, and the number of pupils on the rolls is 58,874.

As to Ulster no table is necessary. In the counties of Down, Antrim, Cavan, Armagh, Monaghan, Tyrone, Fermanagh, and Londonderry, the total number under 20 years, who speak Irish only, is 23.

Donegal is the sole county in the province in which Irish is still, to any extent, spoken. The area of Donegal is 1,190,268 acres. The population is 206,035. There are 368 National schools, with 44,924 on the rolls; and the number, under 20 years of age, who speak Irish only, is 5,183, or about 2,500 of a school-going age.

A consideration of all these facts shows that, in respect of the number, not quite 9,000, of children of a school-going age, in the four provinces of Ireland, who speak Irish only, their absorption into the different National schools would neither involve nor justify a re-organisation of these schools.

It is, of course, a subject of concern that the teachers of those schools in which purely Irish-speaking pupils in number, however small, attend, may be able to teach them rationally and in the spirit of the regulation alluded to by the Commissioners when referring to the bilingual class of children. Unfortunately, very few of the national teachers of the present day are qualified to teach the Irish language. Hitherto, although large results fees are offered for passes in Irish, 10 s. a pass, although the fee for French is but 5 s., only 93 teachers have obtained certificates of qualification, notwithstanding that the requirements of the examination are not higher than those laid down for pupils in the senior grade of the examinations of the Commissioners for Intermediate Education.

IV. You state that you would also wish to know—

"Whether there was any special provision made in the early foundation of "the National System of Education in 1831 or 1832, for the education in the "Irish Language of those children who spoke Irish only."

In reply, the Commissioners desire to state that no provision of the kind was made at the institution of the National System. As well as the Commissioners can trace the proceedings of that early period, the anxiety of the promoters of the National System was to encourage the cultivation of the English language and to make English the language of the schools. No question appears to have been mooted by any of those concerned in the foundation of the National System, or even by its hostile critics, as to the engrafting of instruction in the Irish language upon the English programme of the schools.

V. You also state that you desire—

"To know how the proposals of Sir Patrick Keenan, made in his Report for 1855, and referred to in the Memorial of the Gaelic Union, in respect to the cultivation of the Irish language, were dealt with by the Board of National Education."

The minutes of the proceedings of the Board of that period do not show that any decision was arrived at in respect to Sir Patrick Keenan's proposals. Doubtless, the fact that, just at that time, public opinion was not in sympathy with a cultivation of the Irish language, that the Celtic Professorship in the Queen's College, in so Celtic a district as Galway, was, for lack of students, in abeyance, and that the Celtic Professors in the Queen's Colleges of Belfast and Cork, the great scholar, Dr. O'Donovan, in the former, and the accomplished Mr. Connellan in the latter, were not able to attract students to their lectures, may have influenced the Commissioners in their treatment of Sir Patrick Keenan's proposals.

VI. You then state that you should like—

"To have some information as to the recommendations, if any, of the Royal Commission of 1868, upon Sir Patrick Keenan's evidence, also referred to in the memorial, as to the use of the Irish language in the National Schools."

The Commissioners have referred to the Report of the Royal Commissioners, and find that the latter made no recommendation upon, nor indeed, in the course of their elaborate Report, even adverted to, the question of the teaching of the Irish language in the National Schools.

VII. You then observe—

"The Commissioners would also, perhaps, kindly favour me with any information at their command, as to the desire of the parents of pupils of National Schools to cultivate a knowledge of the Irish language."

This is a very important question. The parents have never manifested any disposition that their children should cultivate the Irish. On the other hand, at all times since the establishment of the National System, and under all circumstances, they have energetically demonstrated an anxiety that their children should learn English. Even in Sir Patrick Keenan's published Reports, in which he urges the view that those Irish-speaking children in Donegal, in whom he was interested, should be taught English through the medium of the Irish language, he depicts the anxiety of the parents to be anything but favourable to a cultivation of the Irish whilst strongly in favour of the English.

In his Report for 1856, Blue Book, page 143, he observes:—

"It is natural to inquire how this strong passion for education could have possessed a people who are themselves utterly illiterate. Neither at Tory, Innishoffin, Gola, Owey, Rutland, nor Innisfree, is there a resident clergyman; Arranmore being the only one of the islands which enjoys such an advantage; nor is there anyone above the rank of a peasant living amongst the inhabitants to give a direction to their tastes, or to counsel them to have their children educated. This passion may be traced to one predominant desire—the desire to speak English. They see, whenever a stranger visits their islands, that prosperity has its peculiar tongue as well as its fine coat; they see that whilst the traffickers who occasionally approach them to deal in fish, or in kelp, or in food, display the yellow gold, they count it out in English; and if they ever cross over to the mainland for the 'law,' as they call any legal process, they see that the solemn words of judgment have to come second hand to them through the offices of an interpreter. Again, English is spoken by the landlord, by the stray official who visits them, by the sailors of the ships that lie occasionally in their roadsteads, and by the school-master himself; and whilst they may love the cadences, and mellowness, and homeliness of the language which their fathers gave them, they yet see that obscurity and poverty distinguish their lot from the English-speaking people; and, accordingly, no matter what the sacrifice to their feelings, they long for the acquisition of the 'new tongue,' with all its prizes and social privileges. The keystone of fortune is the power of speaking English, and to possess this power there is a burning longing in their breasts that never varies, never moderates. It is the utilitarian, not the abstract, idea of education which influences them, for they know nothing of the pleasures of literature, or of the beauties and wonders of science. The knowledge which they thirst for in the school is, therefore, confined to a speaking use of the English language. I met with some remarkable cases, illustrative of their ardent desire to know English. At Tory, a man who expressed himself in English pretty well told me that he had been in a boat with a party of fellow islanders at Moville, in Innishowen, and, to use his own expression, when speaking of his companions, who spoke Irish only, he said he 'was ashamed of them; they stood like dummies; the cattle got on as well as them.'"

In the same report Sir Patrick Keenan observes:—

"At Owey the teacher is an intelligent young man, who has been well trained in a most superior school on the mainland; a fair attempt had been made at teaching grammar, geography, and arithmetic; the senior pupils knew a tolerable share of English; the juniors were still without a word. The master adopts a novel mode of procedure to propagate the 'new language.' He makes it a cause of punishment to speak Irish in the school; and he has instituted a sort of police amongst the parents to see that in their intercourse with one another the children speak nothing but English at home. The parents are so eager for the English, they exhibit no reluctance to inform the master of every detected breach of the school law; and by this coercive process the poor children in the course of time become pretty fluent in speaking very incorrect English."

The Commissioners have every reason to believe that the parents of the pupils continue to display no anxiety in favour of the cultivation of the Irish, whilst all the while they cherish an ardent desire that their children should learn the English. The Inspector of National Schools at Galway, Mr. Downing, whose district embraces the whole of Connemara, writing on the 28th ultimo, says:—

"It may not be quite irrelevant to mention a circumstance that occurred last week. When I was conducting the Results Examination of the only school in my district in which there is an Irish class, I asked the teacher if the parents took much interest in the Irish instruction, and his answer was—'They have barely tolerated it.' He has, in fact, intimated to me that he will not continue it any longer."

VIII. You also wish to know —

"In brief detail, the representations which have been made, from time to time, to the Commissioners of National Education by non-official persons or bodies to engraft the teaching of Irish upon the curriculum of the National Schools, and the steps which the Commissioners have taken upon such representations, or the steps which, independently of any such extraneous representations, they may have taken in the same direction."

The first time that the attention of the Board was called to the subject was in 1875, when the Rev. James Graves, A.B., incumbent of Ennisang, county Kilkenny, on behalf of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland, submitted to the Commissioners the following report of the proceedings of a meeting of that association, held in Kilkenny in April 1875:—

"Mr. Egan called attention to the propriety of an effort being made to urge on the Commissioners of Education the desirability of giving the same encouragement to the National School teachers to instruct the pupils in Irish as in French and Latin. He suggested the passing of the following resolution:—

"That in order to raise up scholars to translate the priceless Irish MSS., and to preserve the Irish tongue from being entirely lost, we, the members of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland, strongly recommend to the Commissioners of Education the importance of paying for the teaching of Irish by the National School teachers, similar to Latin and French."

"Mr. Graves said he would propose the resolution with great pleasure. He believed what was suggested would not lead to the preservation of Irish as a spoken language amongst the people, but rather the reverse; however, it would tend largely to its preservation for literary purposes, which was most desirable, independently even of national sentiment. The importance of the Celtic languages was now fully recognised by scholars throughout Europe."

"The meeting fully acquiesced, and the resolution was adopted unanimously."

The Commissioners, however, at the time, did not deem it expedient to adopt the recommendation of the Association.

The next occasion upon which the question was submitted to the Commissioners was in 1878, on the presentation of a memorial, not, as in the former case, simply representing the views of an archaeological association, but on behalf of a society specially founded for the "Preservation of the Irish Language," and signed by a great number of the most influential public persons, bishops, clergymen, Members of Parliament, &c., praying, as in the case of the Kilkenny Association, that Irish might be placed on the results programme, on a footing somewhat similar to that enjoyed in the case of Latin, Greek, and French. Presented, as was this memorial, under auspices so influential, and so highly entitled to respect, the Commissioners instituted inquiries as to the action of the Privy Council on Education in England, as to the treatment of Welsh in the schools of Wales, and of the Gaelic in the schools of Scotland. They also caused inquiries to be made as to the treatment by the French Government of the vernacular

vernacular in Brittany. The result of these inquiries was of a very adverse character to the aims of the memorialists, and will be stated hereafter in reply to your specific inquiry as to Wales, Scotland, &c.

Whilst convinced of the fact that in the national schools English was the universal and familiar language of teachers and pupils, and that, in the instruction of the pupils, no difficulty existed even in the counties in which the Irish language is, to any extent, spoken, the Commissioners, however, felt that they were bound to defer to the representations of a memorial so influentially promoted, and accordingly they resolved to place the Irish language as a philosophical subject on the programme of extra branches on the same footing as Latin and Greek, and, as regards the results fee payable for proficiency, even on a more favourable footing than French.

IX. This, as has been observed, was in 1878. The Lords of the Treasury, as a condition for sanctioning the payment of results fees for extra branches, had laid down, in 1877, a rule that —

"They must insist upon the uniform charge of an extra fee in all schools; without such a provision they believe that the time of teachers and pupils is likely to be wasted in trifling with subjects of which the rudiments are never mastered."

The fee was 2s. a quarter, payable to the teacher. In 1880 the Council for the Preservation of the Irish language presented a memorial representing that the imposition of this fee was practically prohibitory of the instruction of pupils in Irish.

After a full consideration of this memorial, the Commissioners addressed a letter to the Lords of the Treasury, of which the following is a copy:—

"In July 1878, the Commissioners of National Education, in deference to a memorial numerously signed by persons of the most influential classes in society, added the Irish language to their list of extra subjects on the conditions applicable to Greek, Latin, French, &c. One of these conditions, in conformity with the regulation laid down in the Letter of the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, dated 30th April 1877, was that a special fee of 2s. a quarter should be paid by each pupil.

"The places where extra classes for instruction in the Irish language could be successfully established, were practically limited to the Irish-speaking districts, i.e., to the poor outlying counties of Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, &c. &c. In these counties even the ordinary school fees are paid but sparingly. And it is alleged by teachers, managers, and others that the imposition of the extra fee for Irish is to a great extent a hindrance to the establishment or success of Irish classes. The statistics of the schools pretty clearly establish this. In 1879, the first year of the experiment, 304 pupils paid the required fee; but in 1880, which opened with a period of great destitution, the number who paid the fee was only 68.

"Taking, therefore, into consideration the very exceptional circumstances connected with the teaching of Irish, and also the expression of public opinion upon the subject, the Commissioners of National Education, after full consideration, have decided that the special extra fee of 2s. a quarter shall not necessarily be exacted from pupils learning the Irish language to qualify them for earning results fees in that language for their teachers.

"In view of their Lordships' letter of 30th April 1877, already referred to, the Commissioners submit their resolution to the favourable consideration of their Lordships."

In response to this letter the Treasury relaxed their rule in favour of pupils studying Irish. No extra fee has since been payable by pupils learning Irish as an extra branch.

X. The next representation in reference to the teaching of the Irish language which came under the direct consideration of the Commissioners, was a Petition, presented in May 1883, by the male students in the Marlborough-street Training College, praying that Irish might be added to the curriculum of the College.

This Petition was referred to the Professors of the Training College, Dr. O'Sullivan, Dr. Corbett, Dr. Joyce, and Mr. Doherty, for their opinion.

In their unanimous reply, the Professors said:—

"With reference to your letter of the 3rd of May on the above-mentioned subject, and to the accompanying memorial from the male students then in training, we beg to say that Gaelic is not taught in any of the Scotch training colleges; that Welsh is not taught in any of the Welsh training colleges; that the number of pupils who 'passed' in Irish last year was 17 (out of 35 presented); that the number of teachers who this year applied for certificates of competency to teach Irish was five; and that
"Irish

"Irish could not possibly be introduced into our curriculum except to the exclusion of some other subject of certainly more practical importance.

"We may be permitted to add that we have reason to believe that the memorial was not at all a spontaneous performance; that, in point of fact, it was inspired by an outsider, who would be glad of an appointment as teacher of Irish, and that many of the students affixed their signatures in order not to be considered disobliging."

The Commissioners decided to act upon the report of their professors.

XI. This suggestion is repeated in a document containing resolutions passed at the Irish Language Congress, 1882, and forwarded only a few weeks ago to the Commissioners by the Secretaries of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language. "The cost to the Board," the resolution proceeds to say, "would not exceed 300 £, a sum not too much to be expended on the preservation of the language and literature of a nation."

XII. The first of the resolutions of the Congress, it may be here remarked, lays down that "a practical knowledge of Irish should be made an essential qualification for obtaining the appointment of a teacher under the Board." Considering that in the twelve counties of Leinster there are only eight persons who cannot speak English, not to refer to the statistics of the other provinces; this, on the face of it, is scarcely a reasonable proposal.

XIII. As to the steps, independently of any extraneous representations respecting the cultivation of the Irish which the Commissioners have taken, and about which you desire to be informed, all that has already been said in this memorandum will likely demonstrate to you the policy of the action of the Commissioners on the whole subject. Briefly, it may be described as expressive of their conviction that it is utterly impracticable to make Irish the language of the schools in any part of the country, or to interfere with the free current of progress, under the auspices of the local managers of the schools, in the education of the people in the English language, but that, in deference to the sentiment of very influential classes, they have resolved to do all in their power, consistently with their primary obligation of educating the people in the English language, to advance the cultivation of the Irish language as a philological subject of national interest. Accordingly, as a stimulus to teachers to cultivate the Irish language, so as to qualify themselves to teach it, and as an encouragement to any who possessed a knowledge of it, the Commissioners, in 1882, in the programme of examination of candidates for the first class, authorised the taking up of Irish at choice as one of those special courses in which, under Provision No. 10 of the Programme, candidates must exhibit proficiency. Under this arrangement, a candidate may substitute Irish for Greek, Latin, French, spherical trigonometry, mechanics, chemistry, &c. Since this rule was promulgated only three, out of a large number of candidates examined, took advantage of its provisions.

The Commissioners placed a copy-book, in which the headlines are written in the Irish character, upon their list for sale at cost price (a penny) to pupils of National Schools. The sale, however, of this book is very limited, indeed.

Again, the Commissioners, after very mature consideration, have altered a rule to which many persons interested in the teaching of Irish and other extra branches, which must be taught before or after the ordinary school hours, have taken exception, viz., that no fee for such extra branch is payable in the case of a pupil who fails in reading, spelling, writing, or arithmetic. This change in their rule will, it is believed, have a salutary effect in promoting instruction in extra branches, and certainly remove an alleged impediment to the teaching of the Irish language.

XIV. In connection with this question of the extra branches, it is observed that the Gaelic Union, in their memorial, regard the rule that certain extra branches, of which Irish is one, must be taught before or after the ordinary school hours, "as crushing in its completeness so far as the Irish language is concerned." For a correct understanding of the rule, thus so emphatically stigmatised, it must be remembered that the ordinary school hours for secular instruction are usually limited to four in the day. It takes, it need hardly be stated, all the skill of a teacher and his staff to work into these hours the essential subjects of a primary-school course. No sensible teacher, even if

there were no rule to the contrary, would dream of occupying any portion of his time upon non-essential subjects during the limited span of four hours; and, as a matter of fact, in all good schools, the teachers have classes before or after their ordinary school hours for special instruction. This was the case even before results payments were ever made. Then there are thousands of schools in which monitors must, and do, get their special teaching before or after the school hours. Teachers usually tack their lessons in extra branches to the teaching of their monitors. But why should the extra hour, which the Gaelic Union objects to, be more crushing in its effect upon Irish than upon any other extra subject?

The last Report of the Commissioners shows that in the year 1882 there were, for instance, examined—

In Physical Geography -	-	-	-	-	-	3,998
In Physical Sciences -	-	-	-	-	-	245
In Extra Branches, exclusive of Needlework, or Music, or Drawing, taught to females -	-	-	-	-	-	9,311
In French -	-	-	-	-	-	759
In Latin -	-	-	-	-	-	84
In Greek -	-	-	-	-	-	32
In Irish -	-	-	-	-	-	35

It is clear that it is not the hour of instruction which regulates the success or failure of any particular branch. The wishes of the parents, the tastes of the children, the capacities and industry of the teachers, and the views of the managers are the regulating influences.

XV. And, in the same connection, it is observed that the memorialists complain that Irish, as in the case of other extra branches, cannot be taken up by a pupil under 10 years of age. This rule as to a limit of 10 years of age is a Treasury requirement; but the Commissioners fully approve of it. A child under 10 has not the capacity (and even if he had, he ought not to be permitted) to undertake the philological study of so difficult a language as the Irish.

XVI To comply their remarks as to the steps taken in reference to the teaching of the Irish language, the Commissioners ought perhaps again refer to the official instruction now formally set forth in the Programme of Instruction, the practical import of which is that if there are Irish-speaking pupils in a school, the teacher if acquainted with the Irish language should, whenever practicable, utilise his knowledge in the development of the children's intelligence, and in their better acquirement of the English.

XVII. Lastly, you observe:—

"As doubtless the Commissioners may have turned their attention to the question of the education of the children of Wales in respect to the Welsh language, and of the children of Scotland as regards the Gaelic, or of any corresponding Continental incidents of vernacular education, I should be much obliged if they would kindly favour me with any information on the subject in each country, which they may possess."

As already observed, when the Memorial of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, so numerous and influentially signed, was presented to them in 1878, the Commissioners placed themselves in communication with the Privy Council Office in England, and the Ministry of Education in France, for information as to the use of Welsh, Gaelic, Breton, &c., in the education of the people. Sir Francis Sandford, Secretary to the English and Scotch Departments of Education of the Privy Council, in his reply, stated:—

"No special grant is made for the encouragement of these languages [Welsh and Gaelic], nor are they accepted as Specific Subjects under Schedule IV. of either country."

The Commissioners need hardly remind you that "Specific Subject" is the name given in England and Scotland to what, in Ireland, are called Extra Branches—in the list of which Irish, as has been already observed, is recognised by the Board with a Results Fee of 10 s. attachable.

The Lords of the Committee of Council on Education at the same time were good enough to elicit the opinions of the leading Inspectors of Wales and

and the Highlands of Scotland on the question of the use of the vernacular language in public schools.

The Rev. E. T. Watts, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, wrote :—

"I know not of a single instance in which instruction is imparted, directly or mainly, in the Welsh language."

"Welsh teachers frequently resort to Welsh as a medium of explanation. This practice, within due limits, is a good one; but if largely indulged in—as I fear is too often the case—it retards, in my opinion, the acquisition of English, which, I find, is more quickly effected in schools where the practice is sparingly introduced, and in schools which are conducted by teachers who are ignorant of the Welsh tongue."

W. Williams, Esq., Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, wrote :—

"About three-fourths of my schools, roughly speaking, are situated in Welsh-speaking districts; but I am not aware that the Welsh language is taught, or that a purely Welsh book is used, in any one of them. English-Welsh dictionaries are sometimes used by some of the elder pupils, and some of them are exercised, in some schools, in translating English into Welsh, and Welsh into English; but this is done with a view to learning English. Welsh is not used as a medium of conveying instruction, and is not used at all, except sometimes in explaining the meaning of English words or phrases, and in communicating with young or backward children when they first enter the school, and are totally ignorant of English."

"I speak Welsh myself, but I never examine in Welsh in any subject; but I sometimes ask the children to give me the Welsh of certain English words that I may know if they comprehend what they read."

"The parents are very anxious that their children should learn English, and I have heard of only one man who wished his son to be taught Welsh in a public elementary school."

J. MacLeod, Esq., Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, wrote :—

"I can answer both questions in the negative so far as regards the counties of Inverness, Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness."

"But, to be strictly correct, I may add that when the teacher knows Gaelic he sometimes explains the meaning of an English word in Gaelic. To so small an extent, however, is even this done, that I can only recall one school in the above counties where the teacher preferred questions on the meanings of a lesson to be answered in Gaelic, and in this school instruction in arithmetic, grammar, history, and geography, was imparted, and my examination conducted in English."

"It is not 10 days since an active school manager had mentioned to me that he never found school A. (in a Gaelic-speaking district) so well taught as when under the charge of a non-Gaelic-speaking teacher. Were it not for my experience of the uselessness or needlessness of this Gaelic instruction, I fear that I should be on the side of those who go in for its indispensableness."

Donald Ross, Esq., Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, wrote :—

"I. I have a somewhat intimate acquaintance with the Highlands, and I have never seen a school where Gaelic was directly taught. In some of the remote islands Gaelic might have been taught occasionally; but for the last 30 years even the societies that aimed at the teaching of the Gaelic Scriptures, have confined their work chiefly to English. Gaelic is becoming unpopular amongst the Gaelic population, who are regularly lectured by apostles of localism and patriots, both in the *Highlander* newspaper, and on the platform, for their apostasy, and disgraceful conduct in forgetting the language and the ways of their fathers; and, henceforth, any Gaelic teaching that is to be, shall virtually be thrust upon the population by outsiders. The people know that English is necessary to success in life, and really such demand for Gaelic teaching as there is, is not the genuine expression of the wish of the Gaelic population."

"It is quite possible that in localities where some local magnate or some local society gives a prize for Gaelic reading the Gaelic Bible may be read; but that is for the sake of the prizes, and not of the Gaelic."

"II. In the Gaelic area there are, of course, many teachers who are men of meagre attainments, who are lazy, who know Gaelic colloquially, and who are not capable of giving much instruction in either English or Gaelic. A striking illustration of this is that not a single Gaelic-speaking teacher in Argyll possessed the qualifications necessary for an assistant to the inspector. The lazy and the incompetent may perhaps make use of Gaelic in explaining the English words; but the best teachers confine their instruction to English, allow no Gaelic to be spoken in school, and are thus not only more popular, but succeed better in stimulating intelligence."

"It is only this year that a publishing firm (T. Nelson and Son) took a Gaelic series of reading books in hand. With all their enterprise, they did not risk the experiment till now, and I understand the series is bilingual."

"Such reading books as there were, were of the most wretched class. In fact, Gaelic literature is very meagre, consisting chiefly of translations of a few popular religious books."

"books; of the Bible, and of a Scotch history, together with a little collection of very indifferent Gaelic poets. Fingalianism apart (and even Fingalianism is not equal to the Arthurianism of South-west Britain), the best thing that could be done with Gaelic literature is to forget it. I say this after having analysed the most of it.

"Let it be noted that whatever extravagant statements may have been made by the ill-informed or the interested, English is more or less understood and spoken in all parts of the Highlands with which I am acquainted."

M. Casimir-Perier, Under-Secretary of State in the French Ministry of Public Instruction, in reply to inquiries made by the Commissioners, said—

"Cabinet du Ministre de l'Instruction publique, des Cultes, et des Beaux-Arts.

"Paris, le 21 Avril 1878.

"*De l'enseignement de la langue bretonne dans l'ancienne province de Bretagne.*

"Monsieur le Secrétaire—J'ai reçu la lettre que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'adresser, le 13 avril, et par laquelle vous m'exprimez le désir d'avoir quelques renseignements sur ce qui se fait, en France, en faveur de l'enseignement de la langue bretonne dans les écoles primaires de l'ancienne province de Bretagne.

"Je m'empresse de vous faire savoir que le Gouvernement s'est toujours efforcé de généraliser l'usage de la langue française, à l'exclusion de tous autres dialectes existant encore sur certains points du territoire, mais d'où ils disparaissent sensiblement.

"L'Administration de l'Instruction publique se garde donc bien d'engager les maîtres à faire la classe en breton notamment; elle leur enjoint, au contraire, de se servir de la langue nationale seule, aussitôt que leurs élèves sont suffisamment avancés pour la comprendre.

"En l'état, l'étude du breton n'est donc plus que le monopole d'un petit nombre d'érudits et elle ne tient, par conséquent, aucune place dans nos programmes scolaires qui sont particulièrement l'objet de votre communication.

"Agréez, Monsieur le Secrétaire, l'expression de ma très-haute considération.

"Pour le Ministre de l'Instruction publique, des Cultes, et des Beaux-Arts.

"Le Sous-Secrétaire d'Etat,

"Casimir-Perier.

"A Monsieur le Secrétaire au département de l'Instruction Nationale en Irlande, à Dublin."

XVIII. The Commissioners are quite prepared to admit that neither the Rule of the English and Scotch Education Departments, nor the remarks of Her Majesty's Inspectors upon the Welsh and the Gaelic Languages, nor the communication from the Ministry of Education in France upon the Breton, nor the information at their command, derived from their own inspectors, afforded argument or encouragement to place the Irish language upon the list of extra branches. In deference, however, to the memorialists of 1878, they did resolve to place the Irish language in this favourable position. Since then they have made, as they have described, other arrangements giving additional strength to this position; and the Commissioners have now, in conclusion, only to add that reviewing the statistical and other representations contained in this Memorandum, they are confident that they have reached a limit to the steps which, in the public interests, could wisely be taken in respect to the cultivation of the Irish language in the primary schools; steps, however, which, if rightly availed of, whilst not inconsistent with the utilitarian requirements of the people, will, they believe, tend to the advancement of education.

Education Office,

19 February 1884.

NOTE.

(a.) The following is the programme in Irish in which teachers are examined for certificates of competency to teach Irish:—

1. Grammar. 2. To translate into Irish a short passage selected from the Third or Fourth National School Reading Book. 3. "Tóruibíbeacht Dhiarmuda agus Ghráinne," Parts I. and II. (Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language). 4. Keating's "Foras Feasa ar Éirinn," Book I., Part I. (Gaelic Union). "Mac-Guimbertha Fhian" (Gaelic Union).

(b.) The following is the programme of the examination of pupils in Irish for results fees:—

First Year.—(a.) Grammar to the end of the regular verb, with the verbs *é* and *tá*; (b.) Twenty pages of an Irish phrase book, or the phrases in the First and Second Irish

Books published by the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language. *Second Year.*—(a.) Grammar to the end of Syntax; (b.) The phrases of the "Third Irish Book," or the Story of Oisín in Tir na n-óg; (c.) Translation of the Second Book of Lessons into Irish. *Third Year.*—(a.) A more critical knowledge of Grammar; (b.) The first seven chapters of Keating's "Foras Feasa ar Éirinn" (Gaelic Union), omitting the poetry; (c.) Translation of the Third Book of Lessons into Irish.

MEMORANDUM by Sir Patrick Keenan to the Chief Secretary.

THE Commissioners, at your desire, have requested me to append to their reply to your letter of the 1st of January, a Memorandum in reference to my Report upon the teaching of Maltese to the children of Malta, more than once adverted to in the Memorial of the Gaelic Union. I accordingly have the pleasure of doing so.

It was in my autumn holiday of 1878 I inquired, at the request of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, into the educational institutions of Malta. As stated in my Report, I found that the whole native population, from the noble to the peasant, spoke the Maltese. The language of their homes, of their catechisms, of their books of devotion, of the sermons delivered in their pulpits, and of their markets, was the Maltese. In the Manoel Theatre at Valetta, vernacular representations were given very frequently. Maltese, in short, was not the language of a mere section of the people; it was, as I have said, the language of all the natives.

But the system of education adopted by the Government was to ignore the Maltese language which everybody knew, and to make Italian and English (which very few knew) the language of the schools. The result was that education was in a most disastrous condition. In the country districts of Malta, and in the Island of Gozo, out of 83,776 people, only two per cent. could speak English, after three-quarters of a century of English rule; and only five per cent., after centuries of effort to establish the Italian language, could speak Italian.

I asked myself, as stated in my Report, this question:—

"If the children of the national schools of England were required to learn German and French, and their native English were treated as the Maltese language is treated in Malta, what would be thought of such a policy?"

My course was very plain. It was not the first time I had to resolve such a problem. I recommended that every child should be taught to read the language he knew, his native Maltese; in point of fact, that, in the Maltese, the foundation of his education should be laid; and that through the medium of the Maltese he should afterwards, for reasons very elaborately stated in my Report, be taught English.

More than a quarter of a century ago I found vast districts in the Celtic parts of the county Donegal very much in the condition in which I afterwards found Malta. The children universally spoke the vernacular, and very few of them knew English. The Irish language, however, was so completely ignored in their education, that teachers and managers, as I stated in my Reports, thought it contrary to the public policy even to use an Irish word in elucidation of an English one. The bilingual class, at that time not strong in their English, were also treated equally irrationally. I very emphatically deprecated such a system, and recommended the measures quoted from my Reports by the Gaelic Union. Unfortunately, public opinion was not with me. The next best thing, however, happened. The unqualified right and incumbent duty of the teachers to use the vernacular freely whenever they themselves understood it, as an aid to the education of the children in English, was established by my personal representations to managers and teachers, as well as by my own system of examination of the pupils, and by my published Reports. This has produced salutary results. The Donegal of to-day is entirely different from the Donegal of 1855. There is now no parallel between Malta and any of the districts of Donegal, or, indeed, of any part of Ireland.

19 February 1884.

(signed) P. J. Keenan.

— No. 3. —

The Chief Secretary for Ireland to the Secretaries to the Commissioners of National Education.

Gentlemen,

Irish Office, 22 February 1884.

I BEG to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 20th instant, enclosing copy of a memorandum drawn up by the Commissioners of National Education, in reply to my letter of the 1st of January, upon the subject of the memorial of the Gaelic Union, and to request that you will be so good as to convey my thanks to the Commissioners for the very thorough consideration which they have given to the subject.

After careful perusal of their very interesting and convincing memorandum, I must express my concurrence in the view of the Commissioners that they have reached a limit to the steps which, in the public interests, could wisely be taken in respect to the cultivation of the Irish language in the primary schools.

The Secretaries to the Commissioners
of National Education.

I am, &c.
(signed) *G. O. Trevelyan.*

— No. 4. —

The Chief Secretary for Ireland to the Honorary Secretaries of the Gaelic Union.

Gentlemen,

Irish Office, 22 February 1884.

I BEG to acquaint you, for the information of the Council of the Gaelic Union, that I brought under the notice of the Commissioners of National Education the memorial recently presented to me by the Council of the Gaelic Union, and I have now received from the Commissioners a memorandum setting forth their views upon the different points mentioned in the memorial. I enclose, for the information of the Council, a copy of my letter to the Commissioners and of their memorandum.

After a careful consideration of the memorial presented to me by the Gaelic Union, and of the memorandum of the Commissioners, and after full consideration of the facts stated therein, as well as of the action already taken by the Commissioners, I feel bound to express my concurrence in the view expressed by them, that they have reached a limit to the steps which, in the public interests, could wisely be taken in respect to the cultivation of the Irish language in the primary schools, and I am not prepared to urge upon them to take any further steps in the matter.

The Honorary Secretaries to the
Gaelic Union.

I am, &c.
(signed) *G. O. Trevelyan.*